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ABSTRACT

A model for college-level translation training for the professions at the American University (District of Columbia) is described, and suggestions for adaptation are provided. The training consists of a translation component implemented in existing regular departmental foreign language courses. The model provides students with introductory workshops on translation and the possibility of ongoing translation practice in the context of literary, cultural, or area studies. The mechanics of implementation of such a program; the kind of faculty orientation and training involved; the cooperation required of colleagues; and the effects of the programming on the department, students, and enrollments are discussed. Other options discussed include development of additional, specialized translation courses, internships, inclusion of additional languages, competency testing, and the incorporation of professional translators as resources. The program in question leads to a certificate in translation. Experience with the program to date indicates that it is attractive to students and has improved the regular curriculum without burdening limited resources. (MSE)

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Translation Training for the Professions: A Model for Program Development and Administration

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Developing translation competence and awareness is a valuable activity within the range of most college and university foreign language programs. Training students in translation allows foreign language faculty to bring to the teaching of language yet another pedagogic means that broadens the objectives of all courses in the foreign language curriculum. This practical and professional component, which may well become one of the distinguishing and perhaps distinguished characteristics of a department, need not be achieved at considerable expense; nor need it diminish or weaken curricula offerings of departments which, for better or for worse, have maintained a more traditional orientation. Any already-existing foreign language courses in the curriculum, regardless of content, can be modified to provide a practical translation option for undergraduate and graduate students. Translation training is within reach.

This paper will present, with suggestions for adaptation, one model for translation training at the college or university level. It will describe the implementation of a translation component into already-existing foreign language courses in the curriculum. This model provides students taking regular departmental courses the possibility of ongoing practice in translation in the context of literary, cultural and area studies upon completion of the introduction to translation workshops specifically designed and introduced into the curriculum. The mechanics of the implementation of such a program, the kind of orientation and training of faculty involved in this new translation component, the kinds

of cooperation between colleagues required for its successful implementation, and the effects of such programming on the department, its students, and its enrollments will be discussed. This model has been implemented at The American University in its Certificate in Translation Program.

Beginnings: A Rationale for Program Development

From the outset the Certificate in Translation Program of the Department of Language and Foreign Studies at The American University was viewed in a very practical way. The popularity of certificate granting programs at the University, particularly the Department's TESOL Certificate, led the Department somewhat spontaneously to think in terms of developing another practical, career-oriented certificate in a liberal arts context. In addition, teaching translation, with emphasis on translation into English, would allow the Department to participate in the University's efforts to raise the competence of students' English writing skills, an area in which Foreign Language Departments generally claim they have no way of making any real contribution.

Other benefits from such a program were envisioned. Lower-level language course enrollments, for example, were high. Upper-level courses were well enrolled, but clearly it would be beneficial to the Department to motivate students to continue study at the advanced levels. A certificate program that would utilize upper-level courses seemed to be a way of encouraging enrollments at the advanced level.

One additional advantage to such a certificate: conversations with other teaching units on educational matters,

particularly plans that encourage student enrollment in courses in these units, are always a sure way of making friends and fostering the image of a Department that is able to utilize already-existing resources to enhance its own programs. A careful reading of the University Catalogue revealed a significant number of writing-intensive courses in English offered in various Departments throughout the University that could become a part of the required course work leading to the competency examination in translation. These included Literature Department offerings entitled "Introduction to Creative Writing", "Technical Writing", and "Seminar in Translation" as well as Communication Department offerings entitled "Feature Article Writing" and "Editorial Policies and Methods". Such courses were complemented by writing courses specific to the sciences (e.g. writing for biologists, chemists, etc.) and to the professions of law and justice. These courses were a rich complement to our own Departmental offerings.

Special Considerations

Early in the developmental stages of this Program in Translation, the Department wondered whether such a program should be offered through the Office of Continuing Education as a non-credit program. Ultimately it was concluded that matriculated undergraduate and graduate students at the University would welcome such a certificate, particularly if credits could be earned at the same time toward the degree. Clearly it would be advantageous, furthermore, to have all the courses for the Certificate count toward the Departmental major or

minor in the given language. Not only would the academic program carry yet another distinctive feature but advanced level courses would be sought after when viewed as a part of a Certificate bearing program. Our assumptions have proven correct.

Language sets must also be determined. Although numerous languages are taught in the Department, majors through the M.A. are offered in French, Russian and Spanish. It is in these languages only that students may receive advanced language training, viewed from the outset as a prerequisite for the program in translation. Since the native language of the majority of our students is English, it was decided that our program should emphasize translation into English. Although translation into the foreign language is used for pedagogic purposes, students learn early in the introductory translation workshops that translation into a language other than the mother tongue is generally beyond their range. Students are also quick to realize that mastery of English for translation purposes is no simple accomplishment and that it will require hard and continuous work that goes beyond the kind of writing required in Freshman English Composition or Writing courses. We have to date limited our certificate in translation into English. Native speakers of French, Russian or Spanish whose English is not advanced enough for translation into English have enrolled in our special translation workshops, viewing these courses as a means of strengthening their English language skills; they have not, however, presented themselves for the competency

examination.

Determining Program Goals

One further and major consideration: program goals and objectives must be fully agreed upon before program development can begin. There are significant differences between a program which prepares professional, life-long translators and one which develops competency in translation; there are many possible variations between the two. In our case, for example, the faculty agreed after frank appraisal of resources and faculty skills that it would not be our goal, at least at this time in our evolution, to train professional translators; rather, the goal of the Departmental program would be to introduce students to the many facets of the translation process, developing an awareness and appreciation of the art, while providing significant practice in translation in diverse subject areas. The basic introduction to translation courses in the various languages would, nonetheless, include career information on translation; such information is useful to all students for purposes of determining whether or not they wish to pursue professional training in translation as well as for understanding the extent to which translation competence may be a valuable skill in the international workplace.

Evaluating Resources

Although the Department determined that it would not offer a program that would train professional translators, it seemed at first that without external funding or without additional allocations by the University to the Departmental budget little program development could take place. A program plan did,

however, evolve. We looked closely at our curriculum. The Department offers a variety of advanced courses taught in the foreign language. These include literature offerings and a significant number of area studies related courses which are a distinctive feature of the Department. Among these are civilization and culture courses as well as more specialized offerings, including, to name only a few: "France Today: A Journalistic Approach","Regionalisms in Latin America", "Latin American Socio-Economic Problems", "Cross-Cultural Communication: Latin America", and "Popular French Culture". Advanced language courses beyond the third year composition and conversation level include such courses as "French Usage", "Contemporary French Structure" and "Introduction to French Business Systems and Language", courses which readily lend themselves to a translation certificate program.

Integrating Translation Training into Already-Existing Courses

By introducing a translation element into already-existing advanced courses in literature, culture, civilization and area studies, faculty can provide students on-going practice in translation beyond that offered in the introduction to translation methods and techniques courses added to the curriculum. The subject matter of courses assures a variety of translation experiences in a meaningful and specific context. Students bring to their translations the knowledge and perspectives gained through the course, learning first hand that expertise in the subject matter is essential for effective translation; linguistic competence alone does not

suffice. Because translation requires close and careful scrutiny of a text, whether literary or not, language skills are further strengthened in the context of a content course, yet another benefit of integrating translation training into already existing courses.

Put simply, by integrating a translation component into already-existing courses in the curriculum, a Department can include translation training in a meaningful context and need add only several new courses that introduce students to the basic tools and techniques of translation. Such a model provides a new dimension to undergraduate and graduate courses and offers a practical option to students without straining the limited staff and financial resourses of the Department.

The Program

The Certificate Program requires fifteen hours of advanced work, at least twelve of which must be in the foreign language (students may take three hours in intensive writing courses offered outside the Department). All students must take the introductory workshop before electing to participate in the translation component of already-existing courses in the curriculum. In these latter courses instructors generally require a translation in the subject area under investigation that is completed in addition to all course requirements for regularly-enrolled students. In some courses, a series of shorter translations are undertaken. Faculty guide and assist students in the preparation of these translations. Students who have successfully completed the course and who have produced acceptable translations as an additional component of

the course are recorded as having completed a course in the translation certificate sequence. The mechanics of this process are simple. Such an arrangement requires a flexible faculty who are willing to incorporate this extra component into their courses in order to accommodate students who have identified themselves as Certificate candidates. The faculty willingly accept the extra work involved. There are course enrollment benefits, of course, but more important, motivation and willingness on the part of the faculty stems from the satisfaction of helping students develop a skill that seems to increase markedly with guided practice.

This arrangement assures familiarity with the candidate's translation abilities by all faculty involved. This is important in the advising process, particularly in the case of students whose foreign language skills or English skills indicate that passing the competency examination is unlikely. This procedure also allows faculty to help students identify areas of weakness in translation that need continued practice for improvement. This personalized approach provides both a meaningful academic and advising experience highly valued by students.

Competency Examination in Translation

A competency examination in translation is taken toward the end of the fifteen hour course requirement. It consists of two passages, 250 words each, to be translated with dictionaries and other reference works in two hours. It is a pass/fail examination, evaluated according to criteria clearly outlined and familiar to all candidates. Although

students may retake the competency examination after a three month interval, we prefer to face head-on the question of competency before the examination. Since there is no entrance examination for the program, the prerequisite being the completion of two semesters of an intensive third year Composition and Conversation course or the equivalent determined in consultation with a faculty advisor, constant evaluation with frank appraisal and guidance are considered essential for this program.

Successful candidates receive an attractive certificate prepared by the University and signed by the Chair of the Department of Language and Foreign Studies and by the Assistant Provost for Academic Development at an awards ceremony held each fall and spring for University-wide certificate recipients.

Conclusion

Many aspects of the American University model can be applied by other foreign language departments interested in developing a translation component. By integrating translation training into already-existing courses, Departments may introduce a translation certificate program quickly and with the addition of only several specialized translation workshops that serve as introductions to the basic methods and techniques of translation and, to some extent, to the theory of translation. Depending on resources all students, regardless of language, may be included in the same introductory course, or separate courses for each language may be developed. Since these and all courses are open to all students, whether intended

certificate seekers or not, the curriculum can be enriched to the benefit of all. Development becomes an on-going and challenging process. The inclusion of internships as a regular feature should be fully examined. Additional specialized courses in translation that best serve the needs of the specific student population can be devised. For example, a successful course centering on translation of Spanish materials in the area of international affairs has become a regular offering of the Department at The American University. Expansion to include training in translation into other languages than English can also be explored. Competency testing through an outside agency should also be considered. For example, highly qualified students could take the certification examination of the American Translators Association; training in legal, medical, scientific and technical translation would of course have to be integrated into the program to prepare students for the A.T.A. examination. The extent to which truly specialized training in these areas is included in programs depends on the interests and orientation of the students who enroll in a certificate program and the goals of the program. A program designed to prepare professional translators would have to include such courses.

The extent to which professional translators are incorporated into the program as instructors or guest lecturers depends on resources. Many departments are fortunate in having faculty members who are in fact translators; these members translate regularly for government and private

agencies or are published literary translators.Clearly, departments with faculty who have expertise that goes beyond that generally found in foreign language departments are especially suited to offer translation training programs. Furthermore, when faculty members are trained in non-literary fields, such as business, international affairs or history, the Department will not run the risk of over emphasizing literary translation. It should also be noted that a program that centers on translation into English relies heavily on faculty whose native language is English. Collaboration between native and non-native speakers of English is essential within the Department, particularly when evaluating translations into English.

Although we do not offer a program that trains and educates professional translators, we have launched a unique translation component that has attracted many undergraduate and graduate students and that has allowed us to improve our regular curriculum without burdening our limited resources. It provides extensive translation practice for our students and enlightens all students, whether they seek the Certificate or not, concerning the complexities of translation. And the faculty involved are able to bring to the teaching of language another pedagogic means in a coherent manner and in a context that is practical and meaningful. The extra effort required for all of this is well worth it.